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Viewing cable 05LONDON4981, IMO SEC GEN REPORTS ON HIS TRIP TO THE KOREAN PENINSULAR

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
05LONDON4981	2005-06-15 10:55	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL//NOFORN	Embassy London

Appears in these articles:

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This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LONDON 004981

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR IO/T/HTP, EUR/UBI, EAP/K, L/LEI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/15/2015

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SUBJECT: IMO SEC GEN REPORTS ON HIS TRIP TO THE KOREAN PENINSULAR

Ref: london 4212

Classified By: ESTOff Trevor Evans for reasons 1.4 (d) and (e):

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) On June 10, Efthimios Mitropoulos, Secretary General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) briefed ESTOff on his trip the previous week to the Korean Peninsula. Even before his arrival, the North had indicated that his offer of the IMO's good offices to increase North-South maritime cooperation was appreciated, but that the "time was not right." Instead, much of what he heard in the North involved current perspectives on the 6-party talks and North Korea's relationship with the U.S. Mitropoulos said he had met with the North Korean Ambassador in London earlier in the day, and gave EstOff his confidential notes from that meeting (see para 6). End Summary.

In seoul - messages for the north

[1](#)2. (C) On June 10, Efthimios Mitropoulos, Secretary General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) briefed ESTOff on his trip the previous week to the Korean Peninsula. Mitropoulos spent little time describing his itinerary in South Korea, only to say that in meetings with the President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, he was asked to encourage the North to increased cooperation in maritime affairs and to express the South's concern for the treatment of North Korean ships calling at Japanese ports. In addition, the Vice Minister for the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries asked Mitropoulos to convey a message of friendship

to the North and suggesting joint fishery activities or projects in the context of the bilateral maritime agreement. Mitropoulos noted, however, that even prior to his departure from London, the North Korean Ambassador in London had conveyed IMO's offer to Pyongyang. Pyongyang responded that it appreciated IMO's offer, but in the context of the Sunshine policy, "the time was not right" to pursue the IMO's proposed areas of cooperation. (Per reftel, Mitropoulos proposed that the IMO assist in the following areas: 1) cooperation on search and rescue, 2) joint responsibilities for responding to major pollution incidents, 3) technical cooperation including training of maritime personnel, and 4) cooperation on maritime traffic between the two countries.)

13. (C) The ROK Minister of Foreign Affairs also thanked IMO for offering its good offices to increase cooperation with the North. He then asked Mitropoulos to tell the North that "the message from the South is to come back to the six-party talks." Once the North participates, he said, and the nuclear program is dismantled and verified by the International Energy Administration (IEA), food, energy, and security will be guaranteed and we will activate the maritime agreement. The Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs added that were these conditions met, "funds would be made available to effect these programs." The Vice Foreign Minister added that the South feels it is under pressure from the U.S. He said, the U.S. is trying to stop the ROK from doing anything until the North agrees to return to the talks. The ROK President, he said, will find himself in a difficult position during his meeting with President Bush in Washington. For this reason, it would be nice if Mitropoulos could tell the North that the ROK would appreciate the North sending a positive signal that the President of ROK could take with him on his visit to Washington.

In pyongyang - messages for the u.s.

14. (C) Flying to the North via Beijing, Mitropoulos met with the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and the "President of the Presidium" who told him that attempts to improve relations with the South had been repeatedly frustrated by "outside forces" (i.e., the U.S.). He said the North's attempts to pursue a policy of "consultation, cooperation, and reconciliation" had been frustrated by the U.S. and its stand on nuclear issues. As an example, he asserted that the South had pledged to send the North 500K tons of fertilizer, but ended up only sending 200K tons due to the U.S. intervention. The North, he said, wants to phase out its nuclear program, but through dialogue, since the U.S. is directly threatening the North with nuclear weapons. xxxxx The U.S. should show sincerity, he said, by entering into bilateral talks with the North. Vice President Cheney's remarks were slanderous, he added, and make it clear and the U.S. has no interest in resolving the talks peacefully. "If you meet our American friends, he said, "please pass this message to them - that the U.S. should come with sincerity and honest minds to resolve this issue." He stated, the current U.S. proposal that we dismantle or nuclear program, after which they will give assurances is not fair - the two gestures should occur simultaneously "in trust." Mitropoulos countered that he understood the U.S. position somewhat differently. Further, he said that if the North does not trust the U.S., it seemed to him that it would be better off working within the six party framework, rather than in a bilateral discussion. That way if any party did not live up to its end of the bargain, all of the North's neighbors would be at the table, not just the U.S.

Impressions

15. (C) Mitropoulos said he had few expectations for the North, but was surprised further by what he found, beginning with the flight from Beijing on a dilapidated Russia-made passenger jet. He the flight was about 80% full, with over half the passengers Iranian. He noted, "How do they expect the West to believe their nuclear program is not a threat when flights to the country are full of Iranians?" He was housed in a huge eight bedroom guesthouse with no other guests, and enjoyed a modern TV which included 114 channel, only one of which worked - the government's channel. When he got off the plane, he was greeted by a party including officials bearing flowers that he "might want to dedicate" to the Great Leader. Feeling he had no choice without creating an incident upon arrival, Mitropoulos laid a wreath at a statue of Kim Il Sung while TV cameras whirled. He was then asked if he had brought any gifts for the Great Leader, even though his staff had made it clear that he would not be bringing gifts on the trip. When he visited port facilities, he felt that there had been no special preparation for his visit, and the Port Security Manager was unavailable to escort him on the tour of the Port's security system.

16. (c) notes from the secgen's june 10 meeting with north korean ambassador in london (ri yong ho)

begin text:

Memo for the file on the visit of the Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Korea on 10 June 2005 (on SG's return from his mission to DPRK)

(Covers the DPRK Ambassador's statement to SG's opening remarks)

In his response, the Ambassador of DPRK said that they feel that bilateral talks with the United States would be better able to establish that the United States are serious and wish to reach an outcome. They are not bothered what format is used for the actual agreement - bilateral or six-party agreement - but bilateral talks are necessary to establish the seriousness of intention. Russia and China do not want to pin down what format is used. I noted any discussion is better than none, and that a note of point regarding the 6-party agreement is it gives more guarantee.

Confidence is not there for a bilateral agreement. The point is that DPRK does not believe the US is really prepared to seriously address the issue and reach a conclusion. The US is trying to buy time; and is not prepared to be flexible on the issue.

Also he noted that there is pressure within the US Administration regarding Iraq and France. Therefore, The US are taking a tough stand on DPRK. Within the Administration itself they do not seem to be saying the same things.

Later, when passing on the reaction of his capital to the SG's meetings with Government officials during his visit, the Ambassador of DPRK said that they were grateful that SG had shown interest in the affairs and willingness to help with problems in the peninsula exceeding his mandate as IMO SG. That was strongly appreciated. They were delighted to hear that the SG would bring about technical co-operation for better maritime development in DPRK; and emphasized that SG of IMO, an important agency of the UN system, has sympathetic ideas on the concerns of the Korean peninsula and its status as a nuclear-free region.

The messages brought by the SG from RoK were duly noted and there is some discussion and initial reaction as far as co-operation between North and South is concerned. Some people in the DPRK Government are interested in co-operation with the South, in particular on maritime affairs although others believe these are not the most important ones, placing emphasis particularly on military issues. They hold the view that co-operation in the maritime field is good and they are willing to help whenever incidents involving RoK ships within their jurisdiction so require. But entering into a binding agreement with RoK on search and rescue (SAR) is a very serious issue as it means that the military will be bound to such an agreement and, because of the particular situation with PSI, the military is not prepared to be bound by legal agreements, so it will take some time for consideration. For other international conventions and treaties on maritime affairs, there are only technical problems not political, so it will only depend on preparations which they are willing to pursue.

Re: the 6-party talks, there are some new developments since SG's visit. Their Government has indicated it is willing to go back to the table once there is something from the US side for face-saving, because they want the US to withdraw their insulting comments and particularly the statements about DPRK as an "outpost of tyranny" made by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Once US indicate that these statements are withdrawn or that they will stop, the DPRK will return to the table for 6-party talks. They are open for any form of agreement. They have never been against the 6-party talks. The 6-party talks are better at the end stage but at the initial stage bilateral talks are better for efficiency; or, possibly, the bilateral talks and 6-party talks could go hand-in-hand with the bilateral talks taking part continuously with updates to the 6 parties every 3 months. Once no more insulting comments are forthcoming from the US, things can move ahead. He believes this position has been passed from Pyongyang to the RoK side - today or yesterday.

He assured the SG that he would forward the SG's comments right away to Pyongyang. He also felt that using the sea as a bridge was a good idea, as the SG had suggested. So far, the sea has been a source of clashes for so many people.

SG emphasized the importance of security in the peninsula and how crucial it was to ensure that nothing goes wrong causing the loss of innocent lives.

End of text.

xxxxx
Johnson